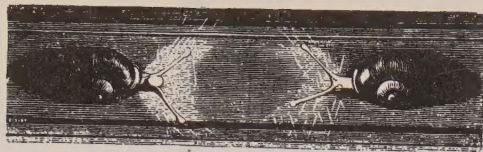


view



"through the eyes of poets"



J. B. ULT

MAXIMUS

NUMBER

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The Legendary Life of Max Ernst

Preceded by a brief discussion on the
need for a New Myth

By ANDRE BRETON



Y old friend the President de
Brosses¹, as we were finishing
the delightful dinner which
he tendered me the other day
in New York (he, too, had
been forced to leave Europe,
the Italians never having for-
given him his irreverences)
said to me — and my shoul-

der gave way under the crushing weight of his hand:

“Are you sure, my dear fellow, that things have come to such a pass? For then mankind would be more than ever in the dark: you are trying to take me in. And there are those clever fellows — you yourself called them to my attention — sanctioning the resort to a controlled idolatry! But these gentlemen of the College of Sociology who have set things going in Paris² assume a heavy responsibility in trying to codify the pure stupidity of the people. In my day, free men with good sense . . .”

He was quite flushed. This was not the first time I had tried to show him to what degree his attitude involved the anachronistically aristocratic and, what is more, sheer inconsistency. “My dear President, from this point of universal history at which we have now arrived (1942) it remains for the ignorant and credulous ‘lower classes’ to pay the expenses of military ventures. Nations, since nations still exist, are hurled periodically against each other. Nothing has changed to such a point that one must admit that their divinities, their fairly simple ideals — or, as you put it so well, their fetishes — or more exactly, the degree of faith and exaltation they place in them, do not decide, to a considerable extent, the issue of battles, and hence the respective fates of philosophies, finally of everything we care about.”

M. de Brosses looked through the window and when he could not locate his famous mail coach, cursed. “Come, come. That’s all nonsense. Egyptian civilization is threatened and some sages propose as a remedy the creation of a new religion! We must first of all preserve from decadence the cults of the dog, the cat, the lizard and the onion!” (His laughter sounded all over the room and it was a long time before it died out.) “But you are not going to tell me that your friends believe they can invent this religion out of the whole cloth?”

“They are somewhat indefinite about that. For my part, I have often reflected on the fact that the average man, in France for example, derived less and less support from secular beliefs and institutions during the last twenty years. No further point can be reached in the process which has separated the symbol from the thing for which it stands. Very well then, making a clean break with all that benefits only from external marks of veneration or respect, I do not fear to say that I have seen engendered — oh! after how many attempts! — the embryo of a new signification. Why should one refuse to seek among the poets and artists of today for what has always been found, from far off, among their precursors, why should not their evolution translate into a decipherable code what ought to be, what will be? . . . Notice what is strange about the attitude of these people: nobody could be more sceptical with regard to received ideas, but see how attentive they become, as if they were listening to new prophets, when it is a question of a teaching which is not yet current, this teaching I tell you, they grasp piecemeal. The prophets are Rimbaud, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, many others: only yesterday there were more than enough of them to agitate the schools. You cannot deny that some of them handle imperatives powerful enough to deflect the course of a young man’s life and to decide the adoption of heroic careers. This much I can assure you of. The obscurity of their language as it reflects their exhortation is not different in kind from that of John or Daniel. Notice, too, that the most active are those who have left no portraits: Sade, Lautréamont, or those who have left ambiguous testaments: Sade, Lautréamont,³ Seurat. You see, I cannot grant you that mythology is only the recital of the acts of the dead: I who speak to you have lived to see disengaged from the banal transcription of his deeds the life of one of my dearest friends, Max Ernst. Here the eye witness I could be yields voluntarily to the adept: I consider the work of Max Ernst pregnant with facts destined to be realized on the plane of reality; what is more, I believe that it prefigures the very order in which these facts are destined to appear. Have we not known for a long time that the riddle of the sphinx says much more than it seems to say? and the labors of Hercules, and the Golden Fleece? If I held the pen of the great bards . . .”

¹ We are indebted to him for: *Du culte des dieux fetiches, Lettres sur l'Italie*, etc.

² Cf. *Vertical*, 1941, Eugene Jolas, editor.

³ Poesies

The President was dozing. "Max Ernst? But isn't he fond of beautiful thighs? Incidentally, could you take me to a burlesque show?"

★

Not in vain it is supposed of Max Ernst that he was born in Cologne, on one of the coils of that liquid serpent which is pleased as no other to excite the sword, the Rhine in which enchanted girls with endless blond hair comb themselves when you are twenty years old. No matter what alibi he deems it wise to present, his *mother-wit* was clearly identified four centuries earlier in another who started from the same city: the arch-sorcerer himself, the great Cornelius Agrippa. One trait suffices to distinguish the wit which these two alone share: that sort of omniscience which achieves balance by means of its gift for satire and mystification and creates what the vulgar understand as "humor." There should exist in some barn with starry windows, hung with a thousand canvases, a not yet discovered portrait of the great Master in the visor of the crescent moon conversing with the Bird which plies the shuttle for all plumage and shields the highest note of mockery. It is fitting that Max Ernst be recognized first of all in this unique Bird. After that each one can behold the argus of his message whose blaze lights up the very abysses of the time in which we live.



Max Ernst, midway between his birth and us, is easily recognized in the above image which I take from the work *British Goblins* by Wirt Sykes published in Boston in 1881. This image is supposed to represent 'Master Proca' who fills the high office of *phantom of the mines*; he crackles in the blows of the pick-axe and suspends himself from the car of those miners who are not expected by wives and fine children down below in the grass.

Later on, in order not to lose sight of him, I ran into him in the Tyrol. He could not, come to think of it, have chosen to appear before me anywhere else. For it was St. John's day, the day when they cut the diviner's rod. The rod is called Gaspard, Balthazar or Melchior in accordance with

whether it reveals gold or silver or discovers hidden springs.

But for me the spirit of Max Ernst, as I understood it from that moment, could never be a prisoner of the human envelope, or, for that matter, of any kind of elegance. But you would not want to see Satan made up like an actor for the role of Mephistopheles! By his first signs in 1919 I understood that he was here for something else again. In these signs a prosaic and routine criticism could discover nothing more than "collages"; but here were fabulous visiting cards! The Bird, 'Master Proca' and Melchior spoke to me with one voice, better still they spread out before my eyes treasures gathered from the depths of the air, the earth and the seas. And all these treasures were telescoped without loss, I say they divested themselves of every trace of usury. Flaws of light opened in the most opaque masses even as the heart shows itself without reason in images of piety or love. The galled flight of the bird, the always more profound pump, and the mounting of the mine elevator determined a *totally unsuspected* meeting-place where were confronted and married the forms of sidereal beasts, of germination, of mechanical traction, of blossoming crystals, as well as, devil take it, the somewhat anodyne pattern of the wall-paper in my room and the bundle of shadow that falls from my hat. *First commandment*: Let everything be rid of its shell (its distance, its comparative grandeur, its physical and chemical properties, its affectation). Not in the depth of the cave put your faith, but in the surface of an egg.

Then, one day, Max Ernst — on this day he wore a magnificent black velvet necktie much bigger than he, since the knot corresponded to his throat his face was detached on the upper triangle — went for a walk with me in Paris. It goes without saying that we were accompanied by the cricket of the sewers, which, since Lautréamont, has the task of magnetizing "flourishing capitals," and, alas, "brings them to a lethargic condition in which they are incapable of looking after themselves as they should." Our steps took us to the prophetically somber quai de Bercy, to the Halle-aux-Vins, streaked with sour and dizzying gusts, to the Châtelet where you are confronted by the hedge of orthopedic gadgets which ingeniously exert themselves to prop man up, to the slaughterhouses of la Villette where the sky looks at the blouses of the cattledrivers. At dawn Max Ernst got back to the abandoned reservoir which he had chosen for his home; it is not far from where the outside boulevards cut the Saint-Martin canal. Clear and level with us a nude woman in a black velvet mask skated without changing place. 1921-22-23 went by. *Second commandment*: Wander, the wings of augury will attach themselves to your heels.

Then, unexpectedly, a fearful event: those with hurts were carried off, rape was committed in broad daylight, woman herself was walled up, the

ram of spring hung his head, even the nightingale was involved and for the first time appeared malevolent. What had happened? That which results from a great hope followed by a terrible depression. Look into the history of human societies. Max Ernst, in the armor of the Black Prince, crossed the stage. In spite of everything, anyone who listened attentively could hear the singing.

It was then that he made his marvellous retreat to the forest. A hermit? yes, and more beset than any saint, folded with woman into a single case of flesh. The sun's sole concern was to crown this forest — the shafts of the trees pressed closer together to prevent anything from entering from the outside. Here we touch on the great secret. Have you observed a lyre-bird in the throes of love performing its mimetic dance in the fern?



The only emotion which reaches out as far as the eye can see is the emotion of this bird, and, yes, that of the sensitive plant. *Third commandment:* Put it far beyond your reach and you shall not cease to create your desire.

Silence. Then Max Ernst made his presence felt by a sudden tumultuous reappearance "in the basin of Paris." In the guise of a large bird he took the name of Loplop, sometimes known as "the swallow." With the help of a superb young female, Perturbation, whom he referred to as "My sister, the hundred-headless woman," he gave himself over with impunity to the vilest crimes against the human self. "Drunkennes shall be his weapon, fire his bite": this program was methodically carried out. Here was the ultra-neronian dream, the sack of all successive Romes. Only the beauty of woman, guarantor of the eternity of art, can be ennobled by sacrifice. These systematic depredations continued throughout the following year. The devils of Loudun made less commotion than those which a new emissary of "the sympathetic annihilator," the little Marceline-Marie brought with her to Carmel. Max Ernst as a young priest: in 1731 he officiated at night in the cemetery of Saint-Medard. *Fourth commandment:* (already promulgated, always valid) Beauty will be convulsive, or not be.

That's all over, like the Flood. The laboratories were opened again: eggs and flowers were redis-

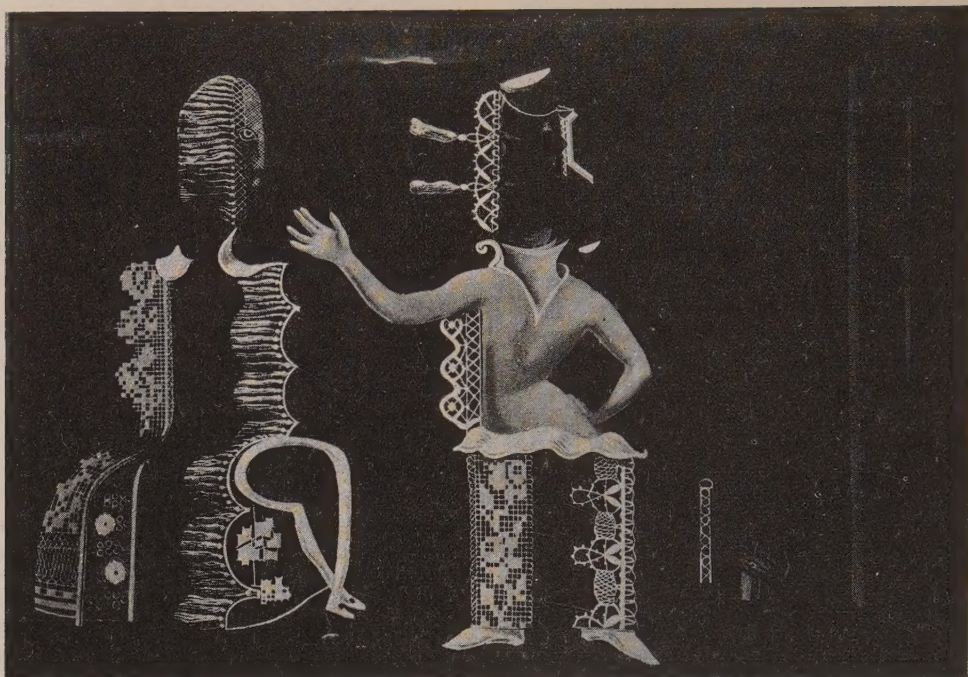
covered in the foam. From the thicket imperfectly differentiated beings began to emerge. Atop old and crumbling walls profuse scenes were organized in the elective light of nitre. The vulture whose unsuspected presence in Leonardo's "Virgin of the Rocks" had been detected, pursued its own course (it was already Loplop in the 15th century). After some majestic evolutions above the flotsam — passing by he presented A Young Girl (1931) — he penetrated to the mountains where we could see him reappear as a god in plate of gold between the six arms of his Sakti. Travellers who have come back from this region speak of transparent men, winged by asceticism, who cover impossible distances by abrupt routes. Max Ernst ruled for several years over these solitary effects of tender caresses, gentle and perverse as the heart of the Sakti, of matter born ceaselessly from matter and engendering the *Spirit* capable of dominating it. *Fifth commandment:* Deny yourself. Revelation is the daughter of refusal.

But even snow is not the most perfect element for certain carnivorous plants. Here is Max Ernst, farther on in time, next to Semiramis. Here are hanging gardens in which gigantic and invisible nepenthes have been planted — it is the last word in the art of sieges. The future aeroplanes are swallowed up like flies, and what a discovery: technical progress is arrested in its contradictory course, death *delegated by man* is no more! Restoring death and progress to their middle peak, we see the mantis in ghostly attitude, then Max Ernst. Hopes. The scene shifts: this is the jungle which bore the human jungle. First ages. A tribunal is set up in the obscure web of liane. The Great Naive Spirits: we recognize the two Rousseaus (Jean-Jacques and Henri), Jean-Paul Brisset, Benjamin Péret, in the center, Max Ernst. *Sixth commandment:* Whatever happens, never doubt.

By all these sluices emotion returns and overflows like the waters that Max Ernst tried to conjure up during *une semaine de Bonté*. It seizes him like a great sunflower to lift him from the caves to the highest summit of being itself: the story of a man. Take care: the torrent carries with it the autobiographical detail which one is weak enough to want to guard like the apple of one's eye. The totem pole continues to look at the sea. The stallion regards the seamare with tenderness and terror. Love is always before you, love (*seventh and to this day the last commandment*).

[translated from the French by Lionel Abel]





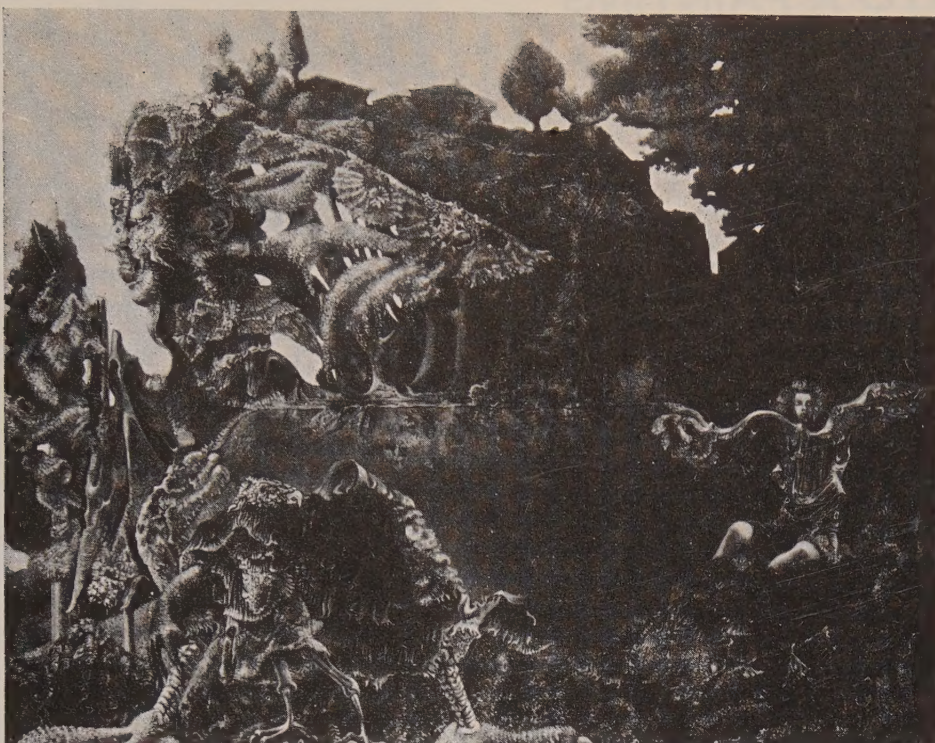
LE COUPLE (1923)

Max Ernst



PORTRAIT OF M.E.

Hans Bellmer



SWAMPANGEL (1940)

Max Ernst



LEONORA IN THE MORNING LIGHT (1940)

Max Ernst

JOURNEY INTO A PAINTING BY ERNST

By Sidney Janis

Perhaps no work represents a focal point in the metamorphosis of Surrealism to the same degree as *2 enfants sont menacés par un rossignol*. Made in 1924, the year of the first Surrealist manifesto, it records for the future the moment of the birth of Surrealism. A manifesto in paint, it speaks of the past, recalling the poetry and mystery of early Chirico, the revolutionary upheaval of *collage*, the violent cleansing of Dada; it speaks of the future, forecasting the crescendo of Surrealist search into the unknown.

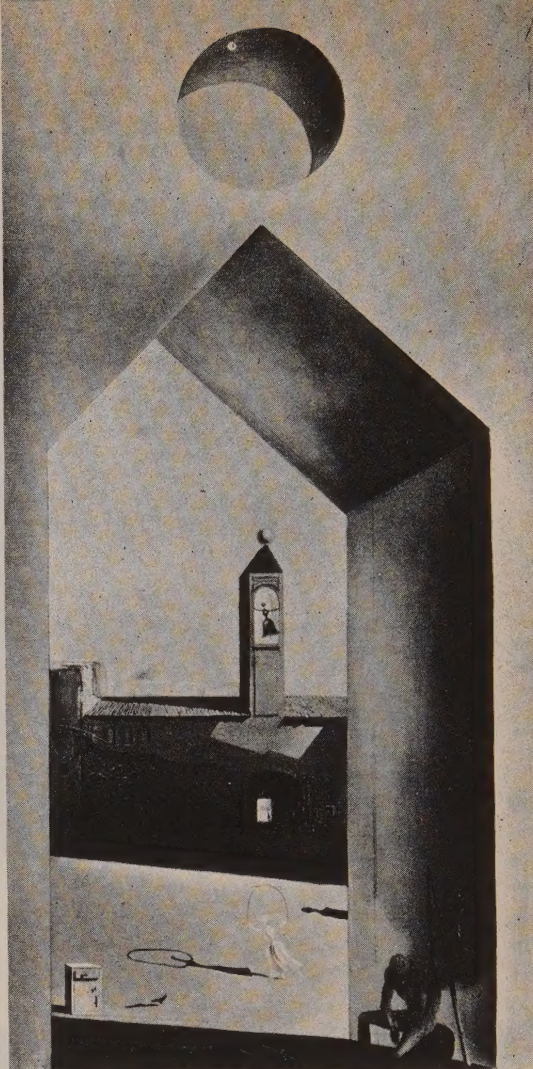
1911 saw in Cubism the inception of *collage* through the introduction of the printed letter, and the same year Chirico began to create his nostalgic and metaphysical landscapes. Though these two fountainheads are at opposite poles, one structural and classic, the other poetic and romantic, both chronicle the mysterious world. Picasso in his *collage* pictures did this by penetrating beyond the externals of commonplace objects and expected relationships; Chirico presented uncommon objects and images in extraordinary relationships.

It was in 1917, Chirico's last fruitful year and Ernst's first, that Ernst began his Dada works. The technique of *collage* which he employed from the beginning has ever since been a source of technical and ideational discovery for him. But it was not until 1924, in this picture, that Ernst merged with his own spirit of Dada, the obliquely perceived emotions of Chirico and the full impetus of Freud, and made of them a fresh germinating source. It is this picture which foretells Tanguy's removed sphere of spun myths, Dali's Freudian content and "paranoiac" images, Ernst's own realm of the marvelous as we have come to see it unfold through the years that followed.

The title of the painting, *2 enfants sont menacés par un rossignol*, a literary extension of the picture itself, is a clue to its meaning. Ernst's *deux enfants* are adolescent girls frightened by the nightingale winging overhead. To the songbird, timeless symbol of masculine persuasiveness, the young girls respond oppositely, one fainting in ecstasy, the other fighting off the "menace," paradoxically, with a knife. The configuration of the bird, repeated close-up, becomes a figure of a man carrying a young child and alighting stork-like upon the rooftop.

These figures enact a dream ballet as the bird and the man holding the child glide in one direction, and the girl wielding the knife, in another; while the prone figure in complete relaxation is a foil to these opposing movements.

The episode transpires within a landscape colored by prismatic hues out of the world of Chirico, brilliant green earth, pink orange house



NOSTALGIC ECHO (Detail)

Dali

and gate, a pink wall that recedes to the horizon, and a bleached green sky rising through darkening gradations to become eventually deep violet blue.

In the same way that the bird and man paraphrase each other, the image of the keyhole within the rectangle on the shack is repeated in the form of the archway within the arch in the background. Then, the tiny statue with uplifted arm standing atop the arch casts a huge shadow which in turn becomes a temple set against the sky. Projecting the characteristics of one object upon another, Ernst has confounded their commonplace identities and supplanted them with new ones. These practices, subsequently used and developed by Dali, became part of the activity he termed "paranoiac."

In 1935, Dali painted a *Nostalgic Echo*, obviously of this very picture by Max Ernst. Eleven years divided the two paintings; still the lapse of time has not interrupted a continuity of idea which takes place between them. For now we have the next sequence of events. Ernst's adolescent with the knife appears again in the Dali, her gesture identical but free of her earlier emotional tension. We find her contentedly skipping rope, her con-

[Collection Museum of Modern Art]





tour and movement echoed in the belfry as a ringing bell. And here it is the nightingale that is menaced. It alights, and as it does, a shadow moves toward it in the form of a snare. This shadow-snare is thrown by the girl and the rope. Finally, the nimble-footed man no longer leaps the rooftops—he is brought to earth to brood in the shadow of his own senility. Relegated to a humble corner of the foreground portal, he is a sorry sight, while in the belfry-tower which repeats the image of the portal, the feminine form triumphantly dominates the aperture, swinging against the sky. The play of ideas in the two pictures is like a Surrealist game in which one participant carries on where the other leaves off.

Then the game takes a turn. Continuity of idea is replaced by interpenetration of idea. Ernst's father and child in proximity to the knob on the frame which is a mother symbol, creates a family unit. This representation carries us to another Dali painting, *Illuminated Pleasures*, 1929, where the family unit appears again. However, the symbol is now the father, being portrayed as a lion's head, and the mother and child are realistically presented but metamorphose into a brimful cup. All of this transpires, as in the Ernst, on top of a construction against the sky. So much for the game.

Returning to *2 enfants* . . . , we explore what might be called the *psycho-pictorial* experience. It

is to the anarchy of technical means that the picture owes the full impact of the Freudian symbols and dream atmosphere. Ernst has nailed to the frame a gate and the knob referred to above; to the panel on which the picture is painted, a shack protruding at a sharp angle. The wall creates an illusion of deep space. Conversely, proceeding from out of the distant background, the wall is oncoming, and led by the shack, breaks through the surface of the picture, producing a shock which momentarily freezes the observer in his tracks as one is held transfixed by a rapidly oncoming train. Shades of three-dimensional films!

Accepting recession as valid, Ernst at the same time accepts the validity of space projecting forward and out of the picture plane. As if to emphasize this, he swings open the gate, breaking into the vacuum that ordinarily separates the spectator from the picture. By this token the observer is given his cue to enter the world of the painting. Moreover, the mother symbol on the picture frame invites the touch so compellingly as to make inevitable the gesture of the man on the roof reaching for it. The very fact that this tactile experience is unconsummated creates within the spectator an irritability so strong that he is urged involuntarily to complete the gesture, that is, to grasp the knob, which, through multiplicity of suggestion now becomes a handle, opening the door to unknown worlds that may lie beyond.

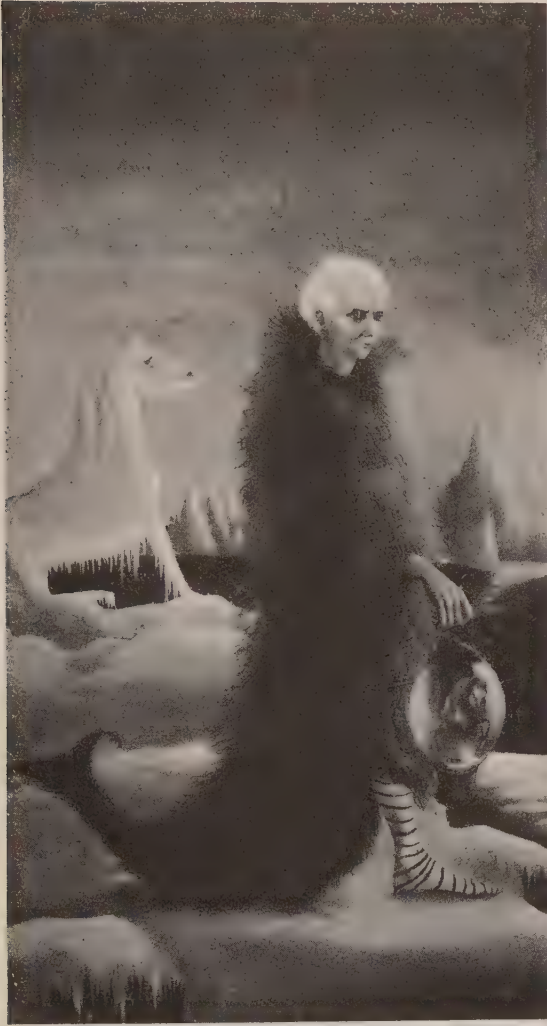


THE
PAINTER'S
DAUGHTERS

Max
Ernst
(1941)

The Bird Superior, Max Ernst

by Leonora Carrington



PORTRAIT OF M.E. (1940)

Leonora Carrington

Love-Birds, Night Birds, Birds of Paradise and Devil-Birds are all clasped in each other's wings in the Subterranean Kitchen of The Bird Superior.

He stirs his pot in the shape of a man and watches his bare arms hypnotically while overhead droves of houseflies and bluebottles, perched on the hanging joints of meat, teach their young to fly.

The Bird Superior watches his bare arms with a pale hypnotic gaze and tiny white pimples burst out through the flesh; stirring seven times and still gazing he sees the pimples shrivel and harden into tiny shining feathers. At this moment a choir of eagles bursts into song while the Devil-Birds and Birds of Paradise unite their beaks in a long foreboding kiss.

Fear, in the form of a horse and dressed in the furs of a hundred different animals, leaps into the kitchen throwing up a shower of sparks under her hooves, the sparks turn into white bats and flit blindly and desperately around the kitchen upsetting pots, tins, bottles and phials of astrological cooking ingredients which crash to the floor in pools of color. The Bird Superior ties Fear to the flames of the fire by her tail and dips his feathered arms in the color. Each feather immediately begins to paint a different image with the rapidity of a shriek.

The song of the white Bats and the eagles mix with the neighs of fear who has the flames of the fire frozen to her tail. Her skin erupts with minute volcanoes which send tufts of smoke through her many furred mantle. She tosses her head and moths fly out of her mane attracted by the bright frozen light of her tail.

The Bird Superior, with all his feathers painting different images at once, moves slowly around the room evoking trees and plants out of the furniture. A still quiet pulse from the petrified world outside becomes audible like distant drums. The birds and the beasts tramp their feet to the rhythm and small earthquakes ripple under the hide of the earth.

Memory races back to the birth of time, whips the infant away from the nipple of an erupting volcano, and tosses it playfully into space; this pleasantry is so gigantic that Intelligence, with peals of agonised laughter, pulls off his head which is Thought and tosses it into space as a plaything for the infant Time.

The Bird Superior preens his arms which have now become wings, unties Fear from the fire and ties himself on her back with her mane. They escape through the four winds which leap out of the pot like smoke, like hair, like wind.

Only seven little fishes like eyeless zebras lie suffocating on the fire in the bottom of the big black pot.





Max Ernst's *Poets*

Of The

BAUDELAIRE

HOELDERLIN

JARRY

POE

Whitman

CRABBE

APOLLINAIRE

LAUTREAMONT

Browning

RIMBAUD

BLAKE

ARNIM

Goethe

HUGO

Shakespeare

Coleridge

CARROLL

Solomon

Heine

NOVALIS

Favorite

Painters

Past



BREUGHEL

BELLINI

BOSCH

GRUENEWALD

Altdorfer

SEURAT

FRANCESCA

UCCELLO

Cranach

BALDUNG

CARPACCIO

VINCI

TURA

CRIVELLI

CHIRICO

Rousseau

Cossa

COSIMO

N. M. DEUTSCH

VanGogh

A Gift from Max Ernst by Parker Tyler

It is not that it holds him. He holds it. But lets it go. It does not stay like a picture, like a yoke in the white of an egg, or like a chicken hatched like a sun for the chickenyard. No! The gesture of Max Ernst is not to be held in paint, whose prison accommodates the genius of such diverse and vaulting painters as Picasso, Miro, Tchelitchev and Matta. Nowhere at rest is the violent home of Max Ernst. He creates only the malcontented image developing, in its hated home, the first limb of rebellion. The sun of paint shines of itself, and its adorers have created its bacchanale without reference to the perfectly natural rights of stone, flesh, wood, or water; the forms it illuminates we fall down before without a thought that we look on — paint only. But

Max Ernst reminds us that we have looked on paint. His oils attract to them things which repel and absorb them at once and we discern in frottage and decalcomania the impressions of an unresolved conflict whose permanent armistice (the thing that inspires it to live) means that no shots puncture the canvas and no one dies as a result. His is a perpetual motion reported occasionally by the grace of Max Ernst and the courtesy of oil, photographs, whatnot; the upshot is an elastic peace of that meeting between the irresistible force and the immovable object. Aside from this vagary of time and space, all is motion amidst Man and his Maxness, arrested as though by the *police* of a medium, in postures characteristic of the *crime* of yearning; this is his inconsiderate gift of *metamorphosis*.

The pure gift of Max Ernst is an itch on the breast of creation. Look, in those paintings of his the kingdom of flesh permits a revolution of feathers by a single decree of *laissez-faire* toward a mysterious and ambiguously gentle suppliant: Max Ernst. And one morning the bride, whom we all know by her hair and her flesh, has a train of feathers whose gentle aspiration has utterly usurped her face and added insolence to majesty. The wish always attendant at her elbow is the bird she is about to recognize with her owl's eye, holding an historic weapon: sabotage. . . Ah, what an adorable discontent: pliant statues purporting to be women; feathers sprouting in the utopia of paint; paint spreading propaganda of stone, leaf, Max Ernst; paint haunting the frame like a detective; and somewhere a child carried off. Somewhere the bare face of the ballet of change, simple as a lock of white hair.

Then look at *Oedipe*, of stone. Not so simple? No! — After all this, not even stone can be so simple. After the sly montage, a veritable ambassador to the underworld of self-deception; the congress of hats; the filibuster of haberdashery. . . . It is a lock of white hair which has turned the tongue of Lautréamont gradually into stone. Then Max Ernst smiled at it. It is enough to make the stone dissatisfied. It does. Look, a psychosis of stone, whose nature is unlaughing. This: this is the incest — so droll, so charming, such a curious and faultless etiquette — the marriage of Max Ernst and his medium. . . Ah, this! Any one work: the classic scandal of his indefinite and unrehabilitated birthdays. . .





ANOTHER BRIGHT MESSENGER

by Henry Miller

Behind the phenomenal world with its feather-weight armadas, sleigh-bells, searchlights and mediumistic trappings, lie the arcane realms where creation never ceases. Here the poet builds his laboratory, blind as a mole but moving with instinctive certitude. If his symbols are shoddy they are none the less authentic: they correspond to an out-worn reality.

In the figures and landscapes employed by Max Ernst we see the vestigial traces of a suprasensual world which, like our own sorry world, appears to be on the brink of collapse. The permutations and transmutations taking place in the physical world have their corresponding echoes in the invisible worlds. Sensitive souls pick up the echoes first, thus bringing upon themselves ridicule and persecution. It is difficult for those who have their being in the lower registers to believe that familiar landscapes may within the space of a short lifetime come to resemble mangy mattresses strewn with dismembered human limbs, gory heads like bowling balls and other dispersed relics of the civilized life. It is even harder for them to visualize the possibility of millionaires' sons roaming naked through the woods, plumed like birds, and searching for fodder on all fours — say in Patagonia, or Formosa. So long as we are merely neurotic, nightmares provide interesting material for study.

The chimaerae, the unearthly vegetation, the symbolic episodes, the haunting passages which lead us in the twinkling of an eye from the fabulous to the invisible and frightening realities, in the pictures which Max Ernst has been giving us for the last twenty years, are not dream images any more than they are accidents. They are the product of an inventive mind endeavoring to translate in worldly language experiences which belong to another dimension. If they are horror-laden sometimes it is not in the familiar nightmarish sense which we are accustomed to ascribe to the functional processes of the night mind. They are compact with wonder and mystery, awesomely real. A glow emanates from them which arises neither from the day world nor the night world. It is the effulgence in which all living substance is bathed and is traceable to the central source of power and light. Within the rock crystal it blazes as fiercely as in the solar bodies. Death does not extinguish it; death strikes only among the ephemeral forms.

The spiritual argonaut scoffs at wings, just as he is contemptuous of inventions which increase the trajectory of a Big Bertha a few more miles. Blind-folded he can pick his way amidst the galaxies with an accuracy denied the man whose

eyes are glued to the telescope. Imagination does not gallop or fly — it overleaps, it turns somersaults, it discovers new dimensions. It seeks exits, not extensions and enlargements. It does not work — it plays. To the imaginative mind a "better" life is unthinkable. The varieties of life do not arrange themselves in moral, social or political hierarchies; these orders pertain to the flat, two-dimensional plane. The poet — and Max Ernst is definitely one of the few poets among the painters of our time — strives to bridge the vertical orders, using the suprasensual ladders, rainbows, linguistics and boreal lighting effects which are also the property of the seer and the mystic.

In this effort to span and transliterate it is inevitable that he should traverse the cloudy realm of "fear and trembling" which hangs like a shroud about the active, earnest participants here below. His bewildering transmutations, now so familiar to us, take on a new character as we progress from station to station along the way of vital destruction. As our world hangs in shreds, as the beards of our phantom monsters become weirdly affixed to the chins of our angelic hosts, as the bodies of beasts and men pile up in inextricable confusion, embracing one another in death, and in turn ravished by the machine, the fantastic jumble of poetic invention begins to appear more and more like order and logic, like the clean-cut preview on a small scale of a world-wide drama whose outlines are still obscure to us. How can a fugitive bird make known to the greedy omelette manufacturers the mysterious content of those eggs which are not rotten?

I think of Max Ernst as I first glimpsed him — a bright messenger from the other world seated on the terrace of a French café with a potation of powdered gold within grasp of his avid fingers. Watching his eager lips I strove to read the bird and feather language which he employed like an adept. I always wondered what he was talking about, yet never dared approach him. His skin seemed to glisten with the dewy agglomerations collected in swift flight. I felt that he was an Intelligence which had borrowed form and substance in deference to the requirements of sidereal politeness. In his awkward moments he seemed like a giant blimp navigating rather helplessly amidst tables, chairs, bottles and bodies of more or less human character. I felt that he was born *dépaysé*, a fugitive bird in human guise, always straining to soar "beyond the exterior world with its wolf dens, cemeteries and lightning conductors." I hoped forlornly to hear him say: "I am wasting time here."



CATA EXHIBITION

March 2

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 1 | The endless town | 1937 |
| | <i>(Lent by Art of This Century)</i> | |
| 2 | Angel of hearth and home | " |
| 3 | Nature in the morning light | 1938 |
| | <i>(Lent by Mr. Henry Clifford)</i> | |
| 4 | Alice in 1939 | 1939 |
| 5 | J'ai lu du tabourin, j'ai mangé du cimbäl | " |
| | <i>(Lent anonymously)</i> | |
| 6 | Spanish doctor, fat horse and young girl | 1940 |
| 7 | The birth of a bird | " |
| 8 | Pigmy in the mountains | " |
| 9 | Tender skeleton | " |
| 10 | ₪ | " |
| 11 | I saw a grand duchess who lost her shoe | " |
| 12 | A maiden's dream about a lake | " |
| 13 | Swampangel | " |
| | <i>(Lent anonymously)</i> | |
| 14 | The endless night | " |
| 15 | The fascinating cypress | " |
| 16 | Leonora in the morning light | " |
| | <i>(Lent by Leonora Carrington)</i> | |

VALENTIN

5 5 E A S T

N E W

OGUE MAX ERNST

- April 11



- | | | |
|----|---|---------|
| 17 | The painter's daughters | 1940 |
| | <i>(Lent by Art of This Century)</i> | " |
| 18 | La toilette de la mariée | |
| 19 | Mythological mother and child | 1941 |
| 20 | The stolen mirror | " |
| | <i>(Lent by Art of This Century)</i> | |
| 21 | Convolvulus! Convolvulus! | " |
| | <i>(Lent by Mr. Kenneth MacPherson)</i> | |
| 22 | The harmonious breakfast | " |
| | <i>(Lent by the Museum of Modern Art)</i> | |
| 23 | Alice in 1941 | " |
| | <i>(Lent by Mr. James Thrall Soby)</i> | |
| 24 | Napoleon in the wilderness | " |
| 25 | Night never will fall | " |
| 26 | Totem and taboo | " |
| 27 | Conscious landscape | " |
| 28 | Comedy of thirst | " |
| | <i>(Lent by Mr. Kenneth MacPherson)</i> | |
| 29 | Galdar Kraftigans | 1942 |
| 30 | Orobas | " |
| 31 | The Antipope | 1941-42 |

GALLERY

7 STREET

ORK



AND HER BODY BECAME

She rolls through an ether of sighs . . .

E. A. Poe

For a work to have meaning it must live the way children, dreams and myths live. Reader, when you cross the threshold of Max Ernst's world abandon all hope of receiving help from the outside; rouse your courage, at each step danger confronts you; you will have to walk alone for you have been given a dream and should know how to accept it.

When, in the days of Dada, pictures were being destroyed, imperceptibly, out of the amorphous, new forms were being created. Now they can live and must fill the life of those who like Max Ernst cannot be satisfied with art and the commonplace. Pictures, real pictures, magic pictures, are the most powerful medium for a post-aesthetic experience. Pictures are windows. What do we see in the outstretched land of tropical flora, of paleolithic rocks, of nocturnal hours and unfamiliar practices? The beginning of things — Eve before she wandered in her endless exile, Eve in a purity we no longer understand.

I refuse to examine the pictures of Max Ernst in chronological order and mark each step in his life work with a check of approval or a question mark. Improvement should not exist or should rather be limited to those excellent catalogs with colored plates of automobiles that are made for us in order to compare the advantages of the newest models over the cars of the preceding years. Art is not a race but a transformation, pictures should be valued for their magic effect. Magic, that astral method of approaching the unknown, is a weapon, but those who respect it follow special rules. Since the beatification of art criticism the brush has become, for the order of painters, an equivalent to the cross; all who paint without a brush are accused of heresy. Those who are not afraid to look into the unknown accept the challenge. None is better initiated to the use of magic methods, for instance, collage, frottage and decalcomania, than Max Ernst. Under the pressure of his gifted hand the meaningless page becomes an image in which startling landscapes are gardens for women, so startling themselves that they tame monsters. With the freedom of a game, the antithesis to the obligations of a ritual, new energies are discovered. Discovery and not revelation is the term that should be used; the difference between them is qualitative and similar to the difference between a Madonna and the female figures in Max Ernst's *Semaine de Bonté*. The title of this article, borrowed from a story by Leonora Carrington, herself a Max Ernst heroine (see previous number of *View*, 11-12), can be associated psycho-

logically with the aureole of the Christian painters, but since the nimbus fell from the Virgin when, in a moment of fury she spanked her child (painted by Max Ernst), light transfigured her, her body became "enormous, luminous and splendid."

Where is the image of images? In this magic game of decalcomania on what must we fix our gaze? Is the central figure a saint or an historical personage? It is the purest of all figures and the most diabolical, Eve.

Max Ernst's latest work modifies our conception of the woman. Among the painters of our time only two others have given us a new version of man's companion: Modigliani and Picasso. The change the first brought about was limited to the world of pure aesthetics while in Picasso — I am thinking of the portraits of Dora Maar — although the artist does give the woman a new soul — she only has the merit to *fit into* his conception of a world whose growth we have watched for over a period of years. It is not the woman who fits into Max Ernst's cosmos, for his world only comes into existence with the woman.

The Surrealists, poets and painters, are particularly aware of the new crisis in the relationship of man and woman. Each era has its own conceptions, but never, perhaps, have all the contradictions in man's attitude toward woman and woman's reaction toward man been more acute than they are today. Since the years of the Industrial Revolution woman became conscious of her social rights. Unfortunately, she often understood her political and economic emancipation as an imitation of man. This lack of femininity, so obvious in times of war, influences women to wear masculine uniforms; they are attracted by the heroic aspect of man's life and are dominated by an aggressive return of the primitive need of human sacrifice. Such extremism provokes a reaction which fashion magazines encourage by dressing women as dolls. This in turn only increases the illusion of independence of the feminist. The woman who is satisfied with her social status today must choose between man's clothes or — this alternative was proposed by a fashion shop — if she wants to be glamorous she should dress like a spy and maintain her ability for conspicuous consumption (see B. Gysin, *View*, 7-8). Thus is added an enslaved soul to a doll-like appearance which only the camera manages to make attractive.

The artist who loves the woman will refuse to be confined to this humiliating alternative, an unattractive appearance or a debased soul. He will see her with the heart of a poet, as the greatest reward to man's aspirations; he will treat her as a source of inspiration. It is the ancient problem of purity reappearing in the setting of our time.

ENORMOUS LUMINOUS AND SPLENDID

by Nicolas Calas

For the Surrealist who does not believe in the immaculate conception nor in the tempting apple, what does purity mean? None describes the purity of woman better than Paul Eluard in his poem on Violette Nozière, the girl who poisoned her mother and father because she needed money to go to a dance:

*Violette was dreaming of milk baths
Of fine clothes of fresh bread
Of fine clothes of pure blood
Some day there will be no fathers
In the gardens of youth
There will be unknown ones
All the unknown ones
The men for whom you are always quite fresh
And the first one
The men for whom you escape from self
The men for whom you are nobody's daughter*

(Translation from *New Directions* 1940)

It is the purity of the modern Eve who — I quote from the same poem — “has undone the frightful snake coil of blood ties.”

In *Nadja*, André Breton describes the modern woman: *Elle va la tête haute contrairement à tous les autres passants. Si frêle qu'elle se pose à peine en marchant. Un sourire imperceptible erre peut-être sur son visage. Curieusement fardée . . . elle sourit mais très mystérieusement. . . Je la regarde mieux. Que peut-il bien passer de si extraordinaire dans ses yeux? Que s'y mire-t-il à la fois obscurément de détresse et lumineusement d'orgueil?* Artists of today do not paint icons but the portrait of a pure woman can have an effect on the well-intentioned as a miraculous virgin had on the faithful who knelt and prayed before her. The transformation which the Surrealist seeks to obtain through pictures is not mystical but diabolical, when it is really inspired as it always is in the art

of Max Ernst it becomes magical, irrational and ferocious.

When the contradiction between antagonistic forces is acute, a system of values must be accepted or rejected in its totality. Eloquently Max Ernst tells us that in the Surrealist conception of life man asks the woman to share his dreams. Without common dreams no spiritual understanding, no purity can exist. In this extremist conception of life where to transform reality and to preserve our dreams are the only admissible sources of inspiration and the only values for judging conduct it becomes possible to understand the significance of Max Ernst's image of the woman.

She lived with him since the days of his earliest collages for he had dreamt of her since childhood; she sprang out of the myths (or the soul) of Romantic Germany and became the increasingly individualized being he and only he knows how to portray.

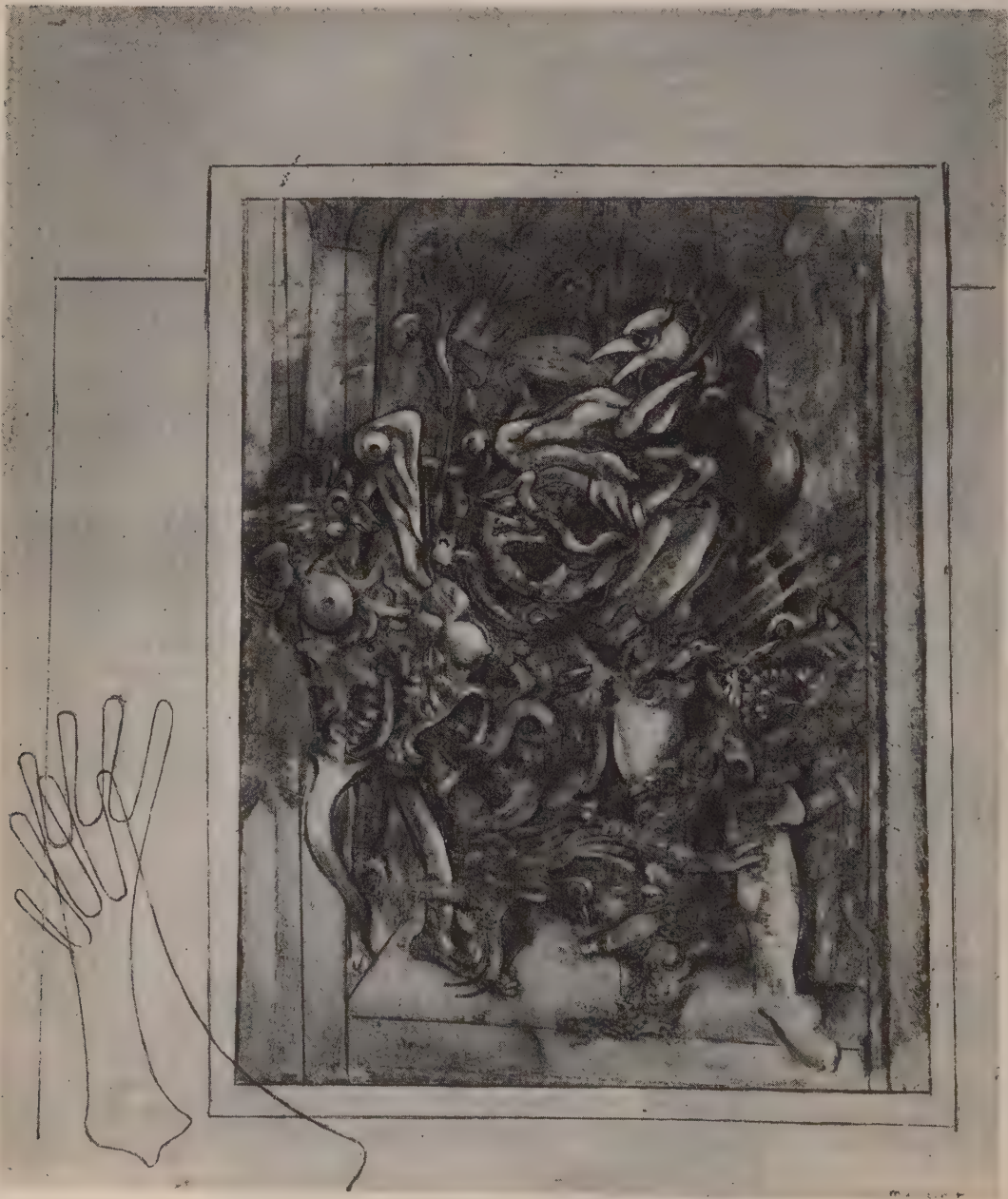
When I think of Max Ernst I frequently remember the apartment of Leonor Fini opposite the Musée Carnavalet. I would sometimes meet him there. Leonor Fini, one of the most inspiring women of our time, walks in the gardens of Ernst's paradise. The truly inspired woman is the exact opposite of that famous criminal Charlotte Corday; instead of stabbing a benefactor of humanity in his bath, fully dressed she lies in this modern “Source.” She is as different from the Botticelli type of beauty as the bath is different from Venus' shell. Water purity and the bath are the concrete expression of the ambivalence between sleep and death, dryness and nudity, provocation and protection, virginity and maternity. Born in the night, like the moon, the woman of our dreams inspires. The woman in our dreams and in the rich dreams Max Ernst is now giving us.

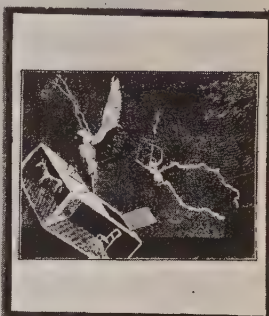
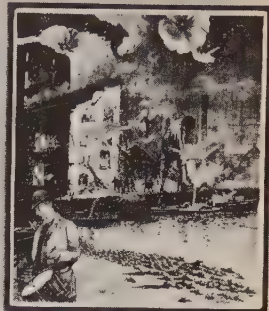


VISION

[Collection Art of This Century]

Max Ernst





STORY WITHOUT A NAME—FOR MAX ERNST

Joseph Cornell



BOOKS BY MAX ERNST

Fiat Modes. Cologne 1919.

Les Malheurs Des Immortels. Paris 1922. (Collaboration with Paul Eluard.)

Histoire Naturelle. Paris 1926.

La Femme 100 Têtes. Paris 1929.

Rêve d'une petite Fille qui voulut entrer au Carmel. Paris 1930.

Une Semaine de Bonté on Les Sept Elements Capitaux. Paris 1934.

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BOOKS AND TEXTS ILLUSTRATED BY MAX ERNST

Paul Eluard . . . *Répétitions — Mourir de ne pas mourir — Les dessous d'une vie.*

Litterature . . . Nouvelle série Nos. 10-11.

André Breton . . . *Le Manifeste du Surréalisme* (2d Ed.) — *Le Château Etoilé.*

René Crevel . . . *Mister Knife, Miss Fork.*

Jacques Baron . . . *Paroles.*

Benjamin Péret . . . *Au 125 boulevard Saint-Germain — Je ne mange pas de ce pain-la!*
— *Je sublime.*

Gilbert Lély . . . *Je ne veux pas qu'on tue cette femme.*

Jan Brzekowski . . . *Zacisniete dookota ust.*

Arp . . . *Weisst du Schwarz du.*

Kafka . . . *La Tour de Babel — Un divertissement.*

T. Tzara . . . *Ou boivent les loups.*

Leonora Carrington . . . *La maison de la peur — La dame ovale.*



EUROPE AFTER THE RAIN (Detail)



I OUTSIDE

I was riding my bicycle, a small boy on a run-away pair of wheels, downhill to the village, and perhaps because the day was so special I remember with more than ordinary precision everything I passed, and in particular two little girls in a field. They were gathering tall bunches of black-eyed susans. Near the corner of the field, by a fence close to where I was circling, was an elderly woman whom I supposed to be their mother. At that very moment a wildly frightened jack-rabbit separated the grasses that were already long at that time of year, so that I could clearly see, as if a curtain had been drawn, the two little girls. Blouses discarded in favor of the warm sun, the straps of their suspender vests thrown off their shoulders and hanging below wide patent leather belts, they were surprised comparing their bared upper bodies. The younger, who was six years old, showed a premature development of rather full breasts. The elder, a mean little wretch, in the access of her jealousy was spitefully pinching the tender and unprotected parts of her sister, just at the moment when I passed. My bicycle skidded and I fell, skinning my leg and disturbing my

THE CHILDREN OUTSIDE AND THE CHILDREN INSIDE

by
Julien Levy

tableau vivant. "Will you go away, you naughty boy," screamed the elder minx, while her soft little sister, I shall never forget, stood ashamed in the background, her vague helpless face suffused with tears. When will shame cease afflicting her deserving children that they may stand boldly forth and flaunt their banners, even the tentative banners, of their superiority?

That little six-year-old, her lips swollen, her lines blurred and hair dishevelled, is persuaded, finally and fully persuaded, of her monstrosity, those breasts and that puberty and, without doubt, those shameful *courses*. Her sister of eight despises and flagellates this unwanted companion, this abnormal and embarrassing relative, this *provoking nuisance*. All the stringy haired, tight lipped, flat chested, hard little girls of eight revile her, and her insecurity is multiplied by the profound affective change mysteriously happening inside, the swelling inside which is more ominous and disturbing than the swelling outside, a disequilibrium and acute awareness and tender sensibility that make her more vulnerable than she can support. She must be a frightened little being, who can only be saved by that mother in the far corner of the field, able to tell her that everything will be all right, and to tell her sister to hold her peace because she, too, by all that is fateful and unavoidable, will find herself one day in the same pubertal boat.

But let us suppose no mother is there. Let us conceive of a state in which all children normally die at the age of eight, or at best the age of nine. No conception of adolescence or of post-adolescence exists in this world, no statues of riper ladies may be seen in the Museum. Then this precociously developed child of six would be no mere subject of spiteful teasing, she would appear indeed a monster, a witch, an object of superstitious terror or of implacable persecution — a *surrealist*!

II

INSIDE

It was close upon mid-day late in June. The sun was high and hot and there were many people in the streets, casual people free of the various interlaced duties, errands in this direction or that, which are usual of a weekday in a busy town. Nevertheless for the most part they seemed hurrying in one direction, towards the antique towers which headed the main street running down through the old part of town; as if at night some carnival had just closed its gates, some firework display just discharged its final rocket, and the excited audience, those who were not going home, were determined to find further amusement or refreshment elsewhere. A young painter and student at the University, Max Ernst, hurrying along, passed three women whom he had noticed repeatedly since their arrival three days before, always together. They seemed a mother and two daughters, the youngest overheard talking in a low throaty voice, rather unpleasant but exciting, looked sideways at him, and while laughing softly with her mother and sister, seemed to be directing her remarks to the young man. Max felt quite inexcusably gay, quickened his steps, paused, then ran ahead again so that he was continuously passing and then falling behind the three women who were now giggling without restraint. He lit a cigarette, tossed the matches high in the air, patted his thighs, pranced, and in short behaved in a crazy fashion. They had reached the two towers and from there on the street went down in long terraces of cobblestone steps, impossible of course to vehicles, but easy and gentle for pedestrians in either direction. Max was dressed incorrectly in a rather too warm tailored suit, hatless, and perhaps because of his peculiarly gay behavior, a policeman was noticed to start towards him. Max held in one hand his box of colors like a small valise and swung this now in a long easy arc, back and forwards as he commenced to leap down the street, jumping the irregular steps, and using the swinging box to carry him ahead on its forward swing, to balance his stride as it swung back. Wishing that the box were more weighty he was soon near the bottom of the hill, and here all streets of the old town converged upon a square before the town hall where there were the two important restaurants and beer gardens. He would, he told himself, soon buy a new suit of gray-green gabardine with a shallow brimmed hat to match. He need not wear the hat, but would carry it. There was the tailor and haberdasher. One could not dream of a better town than this one, where everything you wished for was so close to hand. A compact little town, like a well-fitted and luxurious nest: the room, the bed, the light, the books within reach, the café here with a choice list of delicate wines, amusements at the first turn, music at each corner, friendship in neatly labelled compartments — here you met the farmers, there the students,

the artists, there the tourists, next door the bankers' club, across the street the military officers' — one block to the left is the park where the ladies promenade, and one block to the other side is the district of easy virtue. All the cultured universe contained as efficiently as past and present in the cranium of one man, but turned inside out to spread over a small accessible acre — to be sociable! These conveniences, Max thought, need not be abused. It was not so hard to devote oneself also to studies, to almost uninterrupted studies. But he noticed now that the temper of the crowds had changed. Many of the women had disappeared, and looking back over his shoulder he saw how the girl with the low voice had slipped into the door of a hotel after her mother. He thought of the street one block to the right where he might wander later. Before the wall flanking the gates of the town hall most of the men had stopped to read a freshly posted placard. . . An archduke had been shot in Servia. It was that day of Sarajevo. . .

. . . In the trenches Max Ernst was wounded twice, by the recoil of a gun, by the kick of a mule, in the head. His fellow soldiers called him "the man with the iron head." During his early days at the front he must have found it expedient to evacuate the children of his thoughts to some safe place. Pleasant it may be to have children about and to watch their appealing little ways, but it is not good to see them in pain, to keep them nearby when artillery fire is screaming murder all about. It is not so hard to suffer pain oneself, or even die. But to look into the reproachful eyes of a suffering child who has never known life, nor knows why it has been so suddenly stricken, that is unbearable. Pleasant it would be, too, if after the war is ended the child is returned to us just as we may have pictured him or her in memory. We can pick up a childhood book to re-read the same story, to continue where we left off, as if no time had intervened, but this is only possible with books. With people, unless they are corpses, and embalmed, the living differential forces them to grow, and when the war is over, we must be prepared for a surprise when our child is restored to us, an unrecognizable, if happily charming, adult.

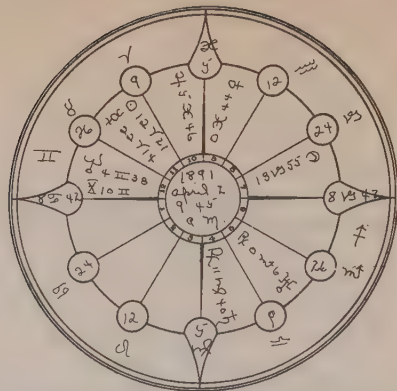
It must be remembered that Max's children were imaginary, and could not really be shipped to relatives in the country, but must be given over to equally imaginary guardians. It was lucky that Max had earned the reputation of the "man with an iron head." It was only necessary to devise a secret place in that head, with a secret trap door like a steel visor hid beneath his hair, to open and close and therein safely to conceal the children, not imprisoned and deprived, but in a landscape infinite with memory and hope and imagination.

For a long time Max did not realize the necessity for this. Like the other soldiers, his days were too full of rehearsal routine, the importance of shining buttons on his uniform; and even in the

(Continued on page 31)

SOME DATA ON THE YOUTH OF M. E.

As told by himself



HE 2nd of April (1891) at 9:45 a.m. Max Ernst had his first contact with the sensible world, when he came out of the egg which his mother had laid in an eagle's nest and which the bird had brooded for seven years. It happened in Brühl, 6 miles south of

Cologne. Max grew up there and became a beautiful child. His childhood is marked by some dramatic incidents, but was not particularly unhappy.

Cologne was a former Roman colony called *Colonia Claudia Agrippina* and later the most radiant medieval culture-center of the Rhineland. It is still haunted by the splendid magician Cornelius Agrippa who was born there and by Albert the Great who worked and died in this town. The craniums and bones of three other magi: Jasper, Melchior and Balthasar, the wise men of the East, are preserved in the dome-cathedral. Every year, the 6th of January, their golden, sumptuously jeweled coffin is shown to the public with extraordinary pagan pomp. Eleven thousand virgins gave up their lives in Cologne rather than give up chastity. Their gracious skulls and bones embellish the walls of the convent-church in Brühl, the same one where little Max was forced to pass the most boring hours of his childhood. Maybe their company was helpful to him.

Cologne is situated just on the border of a wine-producing region. North of Cologne is Beerland,

south is wineland (Rhineland). Are we what we drink? If so it may be important to state that Max always preferred wine. When he was two years old, he secretly emptied some glasses, then he took his father by the hand, showed him the trees in the garden and said "Look, daddy, they move." When later he learned the story of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), he had the impression that this was a war of beer drinkers against wine drinkers. Perhaps he was right.

The geographical, political and climatic conditions of Cologne may be propitious to create fertile conflicts in a sensible child's brain. There is the crosspoint of the most important European culture-tendencies, early Mediterranean influence, western rationalism, eastern inclination to occultism, northern mythology, Prussian categorial imperative, ideals of the French Revolution and so on. In Max Ernst's work one can recognize a continuous powerful drama of those contradictory tendencies. Maybe one day some elements of a new mythology will spring out of this drama.

Little Max's first contact with painting occurred in 1894 when he saw his father at work on a small water color entitled "Solitude" which represented a hermit sitting in a beech-forest and reading a book. There was a terrifying, quiet atmosphere in this "Solitude" and in the manner it was treated. Everyone of the thousand of beech-leaves was scrupulously and minutely executed, everyone of them had its individual solitary life. The monk was terrifically absorbed by the content of his book, so that he represented something living outside the world. Even the sound of the word "Hermit" exercised a shuddering magic power on the child's mind. (The same thing happened to him at this time by the sound of the words "Charcoal-Monk-Peter" and "Rumpelstilzkin.") Max never forgot the enchantment and terror he felt, when a few days later his father conducted him for the first time into the forest. One may find the echo of this feeling in many of Max Ernst's *Forests and Jungles* (1925-1942).

(1896) Little Max made a series of drawings. They represented father, mother, the one-year-old sister Maria, himself, two younger sisters Emmy and Louise, a friend named Fritz and the railroad guardian, all of them standing, only the six-month-old Louise sitting (too young for standing). In the sky an abundantly smoking train. When someone asked him: "What will you be-



(1942)



Photo by
Berenice Abbott

come later?" little Max regularly answered: "A railroad guardian." Maybe he was seduced by the nostalgia provoked by passing trains and the great mystery of telegraphic wires which move when you look at them from a running train and stand still, when you stand still. To scrutinize the mystery of the telegraphic wires (and also to flee from the father's tyranny) five-year-old Max escaped from his parents' house. Blue-eyed, blond-curly-haired, dressed in a red night shirt, carrying a whip in the left hand, he walked in the middle of a pilgrims' procession. Enchanted by this charming child and believing it was the vision of an angel or even the infant of the virgin, the pilgrims proclaimed "Look, little Jesus Christ." After a mile or so little Jesus Christ escaped from the procession, directed himself to the station and had a long and delightful trip beside the railroad and the telegraphic wires.

To appease father's fury, when the next day a

policeman brought him home, little Max proclaimed that he was sure he was little Jesus Christ. This candid remark inspired the father to make a portrait of his son as a little Jesus-child, blue-eyed, blond-curly-haired, dressed in a red night shirt, blessing the world with the right hand and bearing the cross — instead of the whip — in his left.

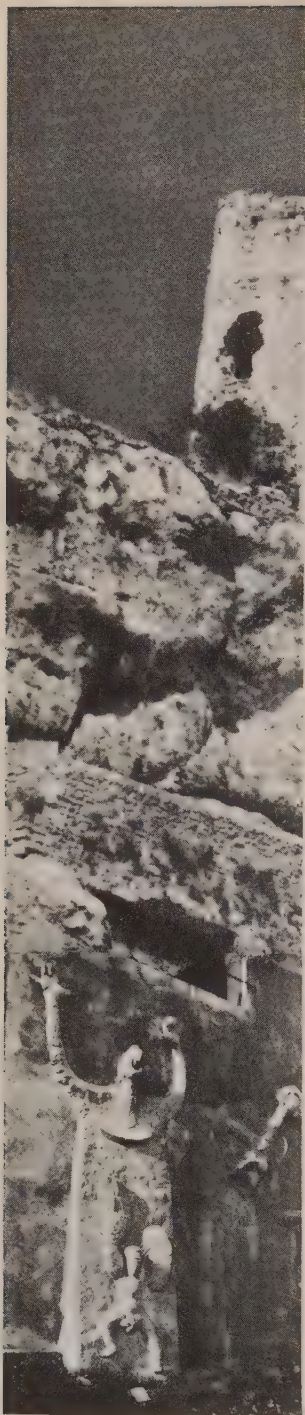
Little Max, slightly flattered by this image, had however some difficulty in throwing off the suspicion that daddy took secret pleasure in the idea of being God-the-Father, and that the hidden reason of this picture was a blasphemous pretension. Maybe Max Ernst's picture "Souvenir de Dieu" (1923) has a direct connection with the remembrance of this fact.

(1897) First contact with nothingness, when his sister Maria kissed him and her sisters goodbye and died a few hours afterwards. Since this event the feeling of nothingness and annihilating powers

MAX AMONG SOME OF HIS FAVORITE DOLLS

Photo by James Thrall Soby





LANDSCAPE LEFT BY M.E. IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

were predominant in his mind, in his behaviour and — later — in his work.

(1897) First contact with hallucination. Measles. Fear of death and the annihilating powers. A fever-vision provoked by an imitation-mahogany panel opposite his bed, the grooves of the wood taking successively the aspect of an eye, a nose, a bird's head, a *menacing nightingale*, a spinning top and so on. Certainly little Max took pleasure in being afraid of these visions and later delivered

himself voluntarily to provoke hallucinations of the same kind in looking obstinately at wood-panels, clouds, wallpapers, unplastered walls and so on to let his "imagination" go. When someone would ask him: "What is your favorite occupation?" he regularly answered, "Looking."

An analogous obsession conducted Max Ernst later to search for and discover some technical possibilities of drawing and painting, directly connected with the processes of inspiration and revelation (*frottage*, *collage*, *decalcomania*, etc.) Possibly "Two Children frightened by a Nightingale" (1923) have some connection with the fever-vision of 1897.

(1898) Second contact with painting. He saw his father make a painting *après nature* in the garden and finish it in his studio. Father suppressed a tree in his picture, because it disturbed the "composition." Then he suppressed the same tree in the garden so that there was no more difference between nature and art. The child felt a revolt growing in his heart against candid realism and decided to direct himself towards a more equitable conception of the relationship between the subjective and the objective world.

(1906) First contact with occult, magic and witchcraft powers. One of his best friends, a most intelligent and affectionate pink cockatoo, died in the night of January the 5th. It was an awful shock to Max when he found the corpse in the morning and when, at the same moment, his father announced to him the birth of sister Loni. The *perturbation* of the youth was so enormous that he fainted. In his imagination he connected both events and charged the baby with extortion of the bird's life. A series of mystical crises, fits of hysteria, exaltations and depressions followed. A dangerous confusion between birds and humans became encrusted in his mind and asserted itself in his drawings and paintings. The obsession haunted him until he erected the *Birds Memorial Monument* in 1927, and even later Max identified himself voluntarily with *Loplop*, the *Superior of the Birds*. This phantom remained inseparable from another one called *Perturbation ma soeur, la femme 100 têtes*.

(1906-1914) Excursions in the world of marvels, chimeras, phantoms, poets, monsters, philosophers, birds, women, lunatics, magi, trees, erotism, stones, insects, mountains, poisons, mathematics and so on. A book that he wrote at this time was never published. His father found and burned it. The title of the book was "Divers' Manual."

(1914) Max Ernst died the 1st of August 1914. He resuscitated the 11th of November 1918 as a young man aspiring to become a magician and to find the myth of his time. Now and then he consulted the eagle who had hatched the egg of his pre-natal life. You may find the bird's advices in his work.

(1941) The bird followed the plane which brought Max to this country on the 14th of July and built his nest in a cloud on the East River.

LETTER FROM

AMEDEE OZENFANT

Dear Mr. Ford:

You've caught me up short in asking for an article on the work of Max Ernst and, as is customary, you treat me the same as I've often treated my collaborators: you want it right away right away. Therefore I've extracted several passages from my next book, *The Beholding Eye*. Thus I shall give *View* a preview of the central idea of this book, the conception of *preforms*. Basis of a general theory of art — and of a philosophy.

I choose this part because it seems to me that many works of Max Ernst justify this theory.

Perhaps I shall be as much misunderstood as understood, because in order to justify my theory I needed 300 pages in the book!

I have been led, little by little, to conceive of man as a vast edifice of needs. And each of these needs as a virtual sort of matrix, "empty," awaiting the sympathetic form which could satisfy it.

(I understand form in the larger sense: form-needs being biological, affective, moral, intellectual, spiritual, social, esthetic, etc. . .)

Pardon me for inventing a neologism: PREFORM. Preform to signify: the "form" of a need awaiting the "form" able to satisfy it.

Every satisfaction presupposes a need: a preform. The preform is the "form" of the need.

Whenever a preform does not receive perfect satisfaction it is because the form proposed to it is faulty.

What is a fault in art, as in everything? — It is the discord between a form and a preform. $200 + 6 = 645213$. You start: "He's mad." Or else, if kindness be your virtue: "Printer's error!" Which proves that your mind possesses certain preforms and that this defective equation is a real shock. $200 + 6 = 206$: you are at peace, a preform is satisfied. If I had written $200 + 6 = 205$ you might have noted the mistake, but you would have been less startled, because you'd have judged the mistake less great. Deserving purgatory but not hell or prison.

The fault is that part of a form is missing "contact" with the part corresponding to the preform. If you play a tune and make a "false note": what is this fault? It is evidently some "thing" that doesn't belong to the form in this tune, or better: to its preform. You see that by whatever end we take hold of forms, we are brought back to the conception of need, more or less sublimated. As the nut determines its screw, the preform determines the "exterior" form. It exacts it, so to speak. The artist who pursues and then discovers the form of a need has at the same time discovered the form of the solution. This is a subject of meditation that could fill your evening studies. . . .

Is this conception of man anthropocentric and relativist? Not necessarily, because I'm inclined to believe that preforms are themselves "formed" by those universal forces that build and manage us. This is why such a philosophy is realist and not idealist. Thus I think I can propose the following (and I apologize for the abstractness): *Our preforms are of the same form as the forms of the forces of the universe.*

In many works of Max Ernst I find a satisfaction of the need to feel myself a part of this universe — because one has need of love.

The following by Max Ernst: *Le Gulfstream* (1929), *Forêt et Soleil* (1929), *La Belle Saison* (1925), *Souvenir de Dieu* (1923), *Forêt* (1925), *Deux Femmes et Un Singe Munis de Tringles* (1927), *La Ville Entière* (1935 and 36), *Forêt et Soleil* (1925), *Le Chasseur* (1926), *Vision Provoquée par L'Aspect Nocturne de la Porte Saint Denis* (1927), *Figures Humaines* (1931), *Les Gallets de Maloja*, *La Joie de Vivre* (1936), and many other works of the first order: they needed to be created by someone because we needed them. The one who discovered the need we have inside us, healthy men, and who was able to find the complimentary forms of those needs: that one was Max Ernst.

The works that I have mentioned and that I would like to own and help myself to are, in my opinion, *true*. That is to say they are useful.

Doubtless my method of verification is not necessarily the same as that of my friend Breton. Breton and I sometimes look at the works of Ernst across two different instruments of control — still we are very well able to look at them from the same height too. Because after all, a good painting of no matter what school, to be good must satisfy certain conditions of human psychology. And a true reality is necessarily true from various points of view — and that is the characteristic of the true.

OZENFANT

THE CHILDREN INSIDE AND THE CHILDREN OUTSIDE

(Continued from page 27)

nights of real attack and defense, illuminated by truly beautiful fireworks, starshells. Very lights, deafened into what seemed like silence from a continuous noise. Even then the glandular excitement of fear and adventure drowned the murmuring palpitations of his sensibilities. It was only one day after smoke had cleared, full of alcohol and sentimentality, that he said to himself: "I am Max Ernst and I must do something about myself in relation to this ruinous wilderness!" Drunk as a lord he sat, dressed in the regulation nightgown become rusty scarlet from mud and blood. Tied about his waist was the girdle of his revolver which hung heavy between his thighs, and he quieted the nervous anecdotes of his fellow soldiers by saying: "Hush, I want to think." Sitting thus in the red morning, in a stained gown, with the war temporarily hushed, and his companions likewise because of his word, he saw beside his left foot a pile of entrails from the devastating night before and beside his right foot some bones, already bleached, of earlier days and weeks. And on the bones, as if on rolling balls of white skulls, stood Jesus. And on the slippery fresh guts, as if on the cushions of an ecclesiastical throne, there was a priest bearing a swaddled infant in his arms. And between the one and the other Max could not choose, because he was so heartily drunk. But in between his legs the revolver softened into tears of liquid steel and dream. And he saw the stream of his life, as a drowning man would, and remembered many childish things: what light first looked like, and what happened to it through a Magic Lantern at school, and how he was both himself and someone else, and the jaws of the wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood* — "the better to eat you with, my dear!", and the sister he never had, who had no face, and the brother who was his father and himself and who was also his son, who was called Loplop, "King of the Birds." And Max chose to consider these things, which seemed important to him, and to preserve them alive someplace.

And so he devised the little trap door in his head which was made of iron, and he put them away there to grow up, while he continued with the mechanisms of his war and peace, and that was his own business so long as he did not need to be troubled about the children. It was not until later, hungry and disheartened in Paris and wondering what more of his lean resources might be tapped, he was to remember those secret places in his head, and the children, and was to find the true material for his painting.

(Excerpt from "Art and Artillery")

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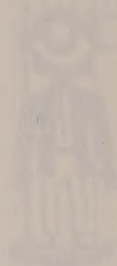
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